

Factors affecting animals' progress

CHOOSING the best treatment to prevent outbreaks of disease is crucial as winter approaches.

What should I jab my cattle with at housing?

First you need to work out if there is anything wrong with them. What is the point of unnecessary treatments? A group faeces sample (40g) can be used to determine worm or fluke infections that are in progress.

Usually six or more animals contribute to a group sample, but talk this through with your vet first.

In some situations where,

“*The environment an animal lives in has the single biggest impact on how an animal performs*”

NORTHERN FARMER VET
Richard Knight BVM&S CertCHP
MRCVS, of Westmorland Veterinary Group

say, fluke is a known problem, treatment choice will depend on the animal type and the stage of infection – remember not all fluke treatments do the same job.

When deciding whether drenches, injections or pour-ons are used, price, convenience and compliance are important factors.

A large number of people choose seemingly more expensive fluke-and-wormer pour-ons, as they are less labour-intensive, highly convenient and lead to better compliance.

Some products have the extra effect of treating and preventing external parasite infestations, such as lice, if this has been a problem in the past.

What about pneumonia?



If you are housing young calves, stores or fatteners, then pneumonia will be high on your lists of concerns.

Often, people are reactive and deal with an outbreak as it arises, but there is no reason that animals cannot be vaccinated against viral, and some bacterial, causes of pneumonia.

Here again, evidence is the key to stop you spending money on something you don't need. History of past problems plays a crucial role on planning for the future,

so it is important to do a bit of investigation should problems arise.

This can be through blood samples or lung washes to see what infectious agents are there (or faeces for lungworm).

My nutritionist tells me that forage is bad this year, what can I do?

We are what we eat, so rubbish food for cattle means poor performance. Plan ahead where possible. Analyse forages, which can be done with core samples of clamp and baled silage from three weeks after it has been harvested.

A few samples from different areas will allow an average to be calculated. Use this information to see what, if any, supplementary feeds need to be purchased. This could be extra protein, energy or molasses to increase palatability.

Analysis is freely available either through nutritionists



BE PREPARED: Richard Knight

or your farm vet. Give a thought also to minerals in forage as especially trace elements deficiencies, such as selenium, cobalt and copper, will reduce performance.

The best way to determine deficiencies is to request a mineral analysis on your forage, which will allow supplementation to be tailored to your farm.

You keep saying that the building design is important in cattle health, why is that again?

The environment an ani-

mal lives in has the single biggest impact on how an animal performs. For example, if all the cattle can't eat properly because of the design, situation or availability of feed, then they will underperform and be more at risk of infectious disease into the bargain as they are run down.

The same is true for the lying areas, be they cubicles or straw pens. They need to have enough clean space, as they do light and fresh air, but that's one for the next time we're on farm.